

MINUTES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

March 15, 2018
West Walker Sportsman's Club
0-599 Leonard Ave., NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

Present for the Natural Resources Commission

Vicki Pontz, chair
J.R. Richardson, vice chair
Christine Crumbaugh
Louise Klarr
Chris Tracy
John Walters

Present for DNR staff

Dan Bock, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General
Keith Creagh, director
Bill O'Neill, DNR deputy director
Trevor VanDyke, DNR legislative/legal director
Brooke Parmalee, DNR legal staff
Stacy Welling Haughey, UP coordinator
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Vicki Pontz called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Pure Michigan Hunt Winners Presentation

In the eighth year of this contest, Wildlife division chief **Russ Mason** said that each lucky winner would be taking home over \$4,000 in donated prizes, including hunting gear and many hunting seasons' licenses. **Mason** thanked the numerous groups and vendors for their generous donations. The winners this year included **Jim Tilton** of Alma, **Amy Ornatowski** of Tawas City who transferred her prize package to her husband, **Kevin**, and **Don Rademacher** of Lake Odessa. The winners said a special thanks to all of the sponsors.

Presentation of the Shikar Safari Officer of the Year Award

Gunnar Klarr presented the Shikar Safari Officer of the Year award to conservation officer (CO) **Bob Hobkirk**. This award also carries the distinction of being Michigan's Wildlife Officer of the Year. Law Enforcement division chief **Gary Hagler** thanked **Mr. Klarr** and the Shikar Safari Foundation for this recognition. **Chief Hagler** thanked **Hobkirk's** family for their support and stated that the division is proud that **Bob** was chosen Officer of the Year. **Hobkirk** thanked **Klarr, Hagler**, assistant chief **Dean Molnar**, the Management Team and the crew from District 6 for the support and for nominating him for this award. He also said a special thanks to his family for supporting him.

Parks and Recreation Update

Ron Olson, chief of the Parks and Recreation division (PRD) shared that 68% of the 2019 miles of the Iron Belle trail have been completed for hiking and biking routes. **Olson** noted the philanthropic efforts of **Andrea LaFontaine** and retired former department staffer **Steve DeBrabander** with this continuing project to garner more resources. **Olson** also talked about the progress that has been made on the road leading to the Porcupine Mountain Wilderness State Park (Porkies). The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the road commission met with PRD staff met and it was noted that MDOT has a special fund containing just under \$1 million for access to state parks. These funds will have to be matched. Parks and Recreation division is working on a memorandum of understanding with these groups detailing the work on the shoreline over the next couple of years. Highland Copper has wrapped up mineral exploration in the Porkies and is in the process of finishing up exploration work on county-managed right-of-ways in the park.

Thirty-five percent of vehicles had the recreation passport, an all-time high. Last month's PRD numbers including an increase of .2% in the recreation passport participation over 2017, lodging numbers are even, harbor nights are up slightly, ORV licenses are up 21%, snowmobile permits were up 12% over last year.

On a sad note, **Olson** shared information with the commission for donating to the memorial fund of **Roy Pederson**, park manager at Brimley State Park, who died in a tragic accident in late February. Those wishing to donate to his memorial fund may do so through mBank in either Sault Ste. Marie or Newberry. **Director Creagh** thanked chiefs **Olson** and **Hagler** along with their staffs for the professional manner in which they handled this situation.

Office of the Great Lakes Update

Rick Hobrla provided information on the Office of the Great Lakes (OGL) management program, including that funding almost exclusively comes through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). **Hobrla** said that the current administration proposed cutting the fund by ninety percent. However, the program has strong support among Michigan's congressional delegation. This office focuses on carrying out the Great Lakes water quality agreement, a commitment between the US and Canada to protect and restore the shared waters of the Great Lakes. The agreement was established in 1972 based on the Boundary Waters treaty of 1909; it was amended in 1983 and 1987 and updated in 2012. **Hobrla** also talked about the Areas of Concern (AOC) that have been identified across the Great Lakes, including 14 in Michigan.

Fisheries Division Annual Report

Fisheries chief **Jim Dexter** shared information of the division's accomplishments in 2017. He highlighted the division's goals, and said that reporting processes, once handled by paper are now being tested using electronic platforms, which will make reporting usable on phones, tablets and home computers. This report may be found at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/2017DNR-FDannual-report-supplementalcontentFINAL_617560_7.pdf.

Wildlife Division Annual Report

Kelly Siciliano Carter shared with the commission that the Wildlife division's original Guiding Principles and Strategies was revised down to seven goals and the work accomplished is guided by those goals. **Carter** highlighted several accomplishments through 2017; stakeholder engagement, wildlife habitat grant work, land stewardship and land acquisitions, wildlife recreation and partnerships with the schools, among several others. The Wildlife annual report

also includes financial information per the fund used for each goal. This annual plan will soon be available on the department's website at www.michigan.gov/dnr.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Update

Sue Tangora, Forest Health section manager from the Forest Resources division (FRD) talked about this small insect that will spread mortality to over 170 million hemlock trees in Michigan. **Tangora** shared information on the six components of the statewide strategy; communication, treatment, survey, data, research and biocontrol and lastly, prevention. Federal, state and partner funds are dedicated to control this disease. Information on Hemlock Woolly Adelgid disease may be found at www.michigan.gov/hwa.

Outdoor Recreation Industry Update

Marc Miller, regional initiatives deputy, reported on new efforts to recognize importance of outdoor recreation as a significant economic sector in Michigan. Michigan consumers spend over \$26 billion per year on recreation. An Outdoor Recreation Advisory Council will be created with commissioner **Chris Tracy** as chair. The council, which members will come from outdoor recreation manufacturing businesses, outdoor recreation retailers, health care, and the service industry, among others, will be conducting listening sessions around the state. **Miller** said that the council will recommend collaborative strategies to support, expand and grow outdoor recreation businesses, employment and consumer spending opportunities in Michigan.

Director Creagh added that the council will be modeled after the successful Timber Advisory Council. A joint invitation from **Chair Pontz** and **Director Creagh** will be sent asking for their interest in becoming a member of the council for their interactions for a better partnership with the outdoor recreation industry. **Miller** added that the council will have an aggressive schedule with recommendations coming back to the commissioner before the end of the year.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Research Consortium

Resource deputy **Bill O'Neill** along with Wildlife's Biological and Social Science section supervisor **Steve Beyer** came before the commission to talk about Research Consortium. **O'Neill** talked about the process and moving towards mitigating and having a healthy deer herd. The department is engaging with hunters and the general public to determine the best management practices for CWD in Michigan. At the time of the commission meeting, ten focus group meetings were occurring. Beginning in April and through May, ten public meetings will be occurring. Currently, they are primarily listening to what hunters have to say. **Beyer** shared how the department is using research and the latest science on how the disease is contracted and transmitted. Also, how the department is interfacing with the science being used in other states. **Beyer** added that Michigan has several studies in progress. Michigan State University is doing research on modeling behavior and spread of the disease. They are looking at deer movement in areas where disease has recently been discovered and where it might occur in the future. The department is sharing science with other states and will continue to be a leader in the efforts to management CWD. He noted that there is federal legislation that would provide funding to states to advance CWD research.

Commissioner Tracy asked about putting regulations in place that will have some meaning the upcoming seasons. What will the timing of the proposed regulations be. **Creagh** offered that a special work session meeting that is planned on May 9 where there may be identification of tools that may be used to utilize disease management. From the information received in May, there would be an expectation of regulations for information in June, with possible action in July. **Tracy's** concern was in getting the hunting digest out on time. **Chair Pontz** shared that in the May meeting, the commission will be looking comprehensively on all that is heard, between

public engagement meetings and focus groups, it will include more specific knowledge on research, and where we can affect change through regulation; a look at what the commission, the department and the Legislature has authority over. The commission could possibly see information in June, which may not be finalized in July, but a decision could be made at the August meeting, in case the extra time is needed providing extra time to hear from stakeholders. The department has indicated that if decisions aren't made until August there would still be time to get the new regulations into the 2018 hunting guide. **Tracy** wanted to give notice to agriculture, farmers, etc., that there may be changes to baiting/feeding in the state, so please plan accordingly.

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development News

Director Creagh shared that the new director at the Michigan Department of Agricultural and Urban Development is **Gordon Wenk**. Former director **Jamie Clover Adams** moved on to work under **Bill Northy**, who is the under-secretary for farm and foreign agriculture services.

Legislative Report Trevor VanDyke, legal and legislative director, provided a written report of legislation related to the department. In addition to the written report, **VanDyke** provided information on recent legislative highlights.

Committee Reports:

Marketing Committee: Commissioner Chris Tracy received an update on new website, and directed that feedback be shared with chief **Phillips**. The committee also received a report from GUD marketing highlighting the program, goals, strategies and unified message.

NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries: Commissioner J.R. Richardson stated that the committee received a report on Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus (VHSV) in the Great Lakes and some inland lakes, chief **Dexter** also reported on the testimony on the cormorant control act (HB 4429) in the Legislature; the department supports the need to reinstate effective cormorant management. The Fisheries update also included information on the panel on Asian Grass Carp in the Great Lakes. **Dexter** provided the 2017 numbers on the master angler program. Lastly, **Seth Herbst** gave an update on invasive species decontamination. The Wildlife division update included information on Public Act 03 of 2018; creation of a 3-day nonresident small game license at the cost of \$50 and Public Act 04 of 2018; allowing individuals who purchased a mentored youth hunting licenses to apply for or purchase additional licenses pursuant to current regulations, including antlerless deer, bear and elk. They also received a review on the 2017 Michigan elk season by **Chad Stewart**; who also talked about the proposed quotas for the 2018 and 2019 elk seasons. Lastly, **Kevin Swanson** provided a report on bear trend populations.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES BEFORE THE NRC

(**Stacy Welling Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 2:51 p.m.)

Erik Schnelle, President, QDMA talked about the importance of habitat in fighting and controlling diseases like CWD. Winter and fawning season are the key periods for habitat improvement and spreading the deer across the landscape.

Dale Hendershot, Michigan Trapper Predator Callers Association talked about furbearer issues, adding that trappers are disappointed about the time to review the new information. With regard to bobcats; the department is recommending that bobcat limit be cut to one, the trappers oppose this, they would like the limit to stay at two in the Upper Peninsula.

Bob Fisher suggested keeping deer hunting regulation changes simple; having a statewide hunter's choice, including single tags-good for either sex, a combination tag choice-a zone where antler point restrictions (APRs) apply on bucks, a regular combination tag-good for one antlerless in archery or one zone APR buck in all seasons, a restricted combination tag-good for one antlerless in archery or one buck with at least three points on a side in the UP or one buck with four points on a side in the Lower Peninsula. **Fisher** also suggested extending the archery season in the Lower Peninsula to January 31.

Sam Morello, President, Michigan Bow Hunter's Association talked about how archery hunting is a sport that takes skill, practice and patience. **Morello** noted that technology has created an airbow or pneumatic gun, which uses compressed air to propel a projectile. The promotion of this newer technology is such that young people, old people and less able people could use it as archery equipment. Michigan Bow Hunters Association opposes this equipment.

Dan Eichinger, Executive Director, MUCC talked about CWD and indicated that he appreciated **Tracy's** comments on the needed for urgency and swift action in response to the disease. He suggested moving up the regulatory sessions, these changes are time-bound. **Eichinger** requested that the considerations for these regulation changes be moved up sooner, to allow the hunting community ample time to engage with the commission, so they have adequate time to review. Reorder the topics lined up for the next couple of months that are not necessarily time-bound. He said that the regulatory conversation on CWD is definitely time-bound. He also said that we are in a compressed period of time to have the dialog. **Eichinger** requested that the conversation be moved up to April, have the orders for consideration in May, to be acted on in June. He added that it is very important to MUCC members and other organizations that these regulatory changes be made as soon as possible. **Eichinger** said that it is unacceptable to his organization to delay regulatory changes that could have been discussed early enough so that they could be implemented for the 2018 hunting seasons. He reiterated moving up the regulatory considerations for CWD management and put off those changes that are not time-bound to the end of that process.

Regarding Sandhill crane hunting in Michigan, conversation has been coming forward due to a resolution that MUCC passed in June on what the future of Sandhill crane hunting will be in Michigan. MUCC was a strong advocate for the Scientific Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act and they believe in sound science and natural resources management. In their resolution, they asked for the commission to review the possibility of a Sandhill crane hunting season in Michigan. **Eichinger** also said that they are not asking the commission to establish a hunting season unless the science leads them in that direction and the resource can support it. **Eichinger** said that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicated there is an ample population for harvest of Sandhill cranes and that there are other states within the Mississippi Flyway that hunt Sandhill cranes currently. His organization realizes that there are resource conflicts that can be resolved and mitigated with a well-managed limited hunting season for Sandhill cranes. **Eichinger** asked that the commission moved forward with their due diligence of that opportunity for Michigan's hunters and he appreciates the fact that they aren't prejudging the outcome and will be making a decision with all the right science when all that information comes to conclusion sometime later this year.

Pontz asked a question for clarification relative to the commission's timing on decisions, the commission is talking the difference of only one month, the public engagement meetings happen in April and May, at the May meeting the commission wants to have a more comprehensive discussion that would incorporate all of those public meetings, still with the intention of having the decisions made in time for the 2018 season, she asked what MUCC is asking the commission to do differently. **Eichinger** said that he knows there are some regulatory considerations that the commission knows about today, not things that will come out of the focused conversations held or the April/May public engagement sessions. He wants the known items on the table in April, speaking specifically about time, stall the conversations about privately-owned cervidae facilities, he doesn't feel that issue is time-bound to what our regulatory process is. **Pontz** stated that the commission feels like they are starting that process early through the public engagement meetings, they won't only be talking about baiting and feeding, but all potential regulatory changes that could take place in a public engagement forum and then come back in May and have that same discussion in this forum. She added that we are looking for the same outcome, regulatory changes to be made relative to the 2018 seasons. **Commissioner Tracy** asked if the department has shared what the public meetings are going to look like with MUCC; **Eichinger** said that and deputy director **O'Neill** shared that information at their recent policy meeting. **Eichinger** says that there are regulatory changes that the department knows the commission will be changing already.

Renee Kermeen, a farmer in Middleville whose property has much wildlife shared that five years ago they had their first two cranes show up, doing their dancing and flapping their wings. Last summer they were delighted by a flock of 25. She talked about CraneFest, an annual event in Bellevue that celebrates the species. **Kermeen** closed by saying that these birds are unique, and we are lucky to have them to enjoy. Please keep the Sandhill cranes to enjoy.

Jim Maturen and **Steve Cunningham**, Michigan Resource Stewards, where many are retired former biologists and they speak up on natural resources issues. **Cunningham** presented a resolution on CWD to the commission in which they petition the Governor, the Legislature, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to develop stronger direction to regulate and reduce captive (farmed) cervid facilities to reduce CWD movement and risk; further, they asked that a statewide ban on feeding and baiting of deer be reinstated and that they will continue to support increased efforts to combat the disease in Michigan.

Maturen added that QDMA has been pushing for statewide APRs, and MUCC resolution #1 to accelerate APRs. He feels if APRs had been instituted in southern Michigan, where the bulk of positive CWD young deer have been found, they would not have been harvested and would still be transmitting the disease.

Chauncey Moran talked about Senate Bills 839, 840 and 881, that will be overturning some hard work they had done on Part 632 on mining in 2003 through 2005. There is no mention of DNR for mining projects. The department owns, but leased mineral rights. On water withdrawal, he knows that it has been addressed and senate bills, the water withdrawal bill, House Bill 5638, allows no more site-specific if withdrawing over 10,000 gallons, you can draw as much water as you want to as long as the water is put back into the ground. He talked about pot ash mining meeting in Ewart, many state employees were in attendance. He would like the department to wade into the water withdrawal issue in the state.

Carol Shuckra speaking on behalf of her friend, **Elsie Dakota**, said that Sandhill cranes are the slowest reproducing bird and that they face high mortality. They mate for life and the parents team to protect their young. **Shuckra** and **Dakota** asked that the status of this amazing species does not change.

Keith Phelps discussed the CWD recommendations to the commission in December, he was not in agreement with those recommendations. He suggested that all baiting bans be lifted statewide, but the limit be five gallons, he would like the fear agenda reversed and that check stations are voluntary, making it known that CWD is not as serious as first thought. He would like the department's direction changed to a research and discover. **Phelps** suggested changing the mission statement to read, "Continuing Researching CWD to Become a Leader."

Pete Cornish suggested that air in Michigan is a strategic force and that we should dedicate "air trails." He believes this change needs to be made to Public Act 451, or all small airports will disappear.

Julie Baker had suggested having experts on the Sandhill crane hold a discussion at an commission meeting, which was not supported by the department as there are no plans to make the species a game species. Because of what she believes is talking behind the scenes and internal staff records received via a freedom of information act request, which she said suggested that the commission is going to move forward to make the crane a game species, she once again asked that the Songbird Protection Coalition's experts in this field to be able to schedule time at an upcoming commission meeting to present their case on this issue. **Baker** ended by adding to please keep Sandhill cranes protected.

Carl Manning resident of Ottawa county, stated that he and **Mrs. Manning** do not want a recreational hunting season on Sandhill cranes established.

Chair Pontz adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 4:08 p.m. and called to order the regular meeting of the NRC at 4:09 p.m. She noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

FOR INFORMATION ONLY - NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

Pontz reviewed the items up for information only.

Elk Regulations, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No 4 of 2018, FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Public Act 03 of 2018; Introduction of New 3-Day Non-Resident Small Game License with Waterfowl License Issuing Rights, and Public Act 04 of 2018; Allow Mentored Youth Hunters to Purchase Additional Licenses, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 5 of 2018, FOR INFORMATION ONLY

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes, February 8, 2018 Natural Resources Commission Meeting

Commissioner Walters made a motion that the minutes of the February 8, 2018 meeting be approved. **Commissioner Tracy** supported the motion. **Pontz** called for discussion, **Commission Crumbaugh** abstained, due to her absence at that meeting, there being no more, a vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons, Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 3 of 2018.

Commissioner Tracy made a motion that Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment No. 3 of 2018, Migratory Game Bird Hunting Seasons be adopted. **Commissioner Klarr** supported the motion. **Pontz** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS

Director Creagh listed the "director's action" items on the agenda and indicated he would approve all items.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Walters shared that on February 14 he appeared before the Senate Natural Resources Committee's advise and consent hearing for approval as a commissioner. He also attended the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo and encouraged others to attend these types of events.

Commissioner Richardson thanked the chair and director for coming to the UP and speaking with residents of the UP, their conversations were greatly appreciated.

Commissioner Klarr thanked West Walker Sportsman's Club for the use of the facilities. She attended a Ducks Unlimited Banquet in Jackson and the Southeastern Wildlife Exposition in Charleston, South Carolina. She had her first woodcock sighting on February 15, and went down south and went quail hunting twice.

Commissioner Tracy said that he appreciated the Coffee with the Commissioners and enjoys speaking with the public.

Director Creagh thanked **Commissioner Richardson** for the UP hospitality. He also did some bear den checks. He went to Washington DC and visited with USDA-APHIS talking about TB prevalence in deer and the intersect between natural resources and agriculture. He also talked with the Forest Service about good neighbor authority and how we can expand on that. In addition, he met with **Senator Stabenow's** staff and talked with the Army Corp. of Engineers regarding Brandon Lock and Dam.

Chair Pontz attended the UP 200 and attended a UP Whitetails meeting. She greatly enjoyed the time and conversation with the members of the UP groups. She thanked **Stacy Haughey** for putting it all together. Lastly, she mentioned the passing of fellow conservationist, **John Robertson**.


Next Meeting

Chair Pontz announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, April 12, 2018 at the MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, 4125 Beaumont Road, Lansing. Committees meeting that day will be the Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee and the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries.

Adjournment

Commissioner Klarr made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Crumbaugh** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:17 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 4/12/18



Vicki J. Pontz, NRC Chair



Keith Creagh, DNR Director